

of the rewritten claims. Marked-up versions of claims 1, 8-12, 16, 19, 21, 24, 25, and 26 are attached as separate sheets.

1. (Amended) A decorative item comprising:

a basis material of a stainless steel,

a carburized hardened layer extending from a surface of the basis material to an arbitrary depth wherein carbon is diffused so as to form a solid solution in which crystalline chromium carbide is not formed; and

at least one hard coating disposed on a surface of the carburized hardened layer of the basis material,

wherein the hard coating has a surface hardness greater than that of the carburized layer.

8. (Amended) The decorative item as claimed in claim 7, further comprising an intermediate layer disposed between the hard coating of carbon and a surface of the carburized hardened layer of the basis material.

9. (Amended) The decorative item as claimed in claim 8, wherein the intermediate layer comprises a lower layer of Ti or Cr disposed on the carburized hardened layer surface of the basis material and an upper layer of Si or Ge disposed on a surface of the lower layer.

10. (Twice Amended) The decorative item as claimed in claim 1, wherein at least

two hard coatings are formed on the carburized hardened layer surface of the basis material.

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11. (Twice Amended) The decorative item as claimed in claim 1, wherein at least two hard coatings are laminated on the carburized hardened layer surface of the basis material.

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12. (Twice Amended) The decorative item as claimed in claim 1, wherein the hard coating is disposed on portion of the carburized hardened layer surface of the basis material.

16. (Amended) A process for producing a decorative item, comprising the steps of:

providing a basis material of stainless steel,
carburizing a surface of the basis material to form a carburized hardened layer extending from the surface of the basis material to an arbitrary depth wherein carbon is diffused so as to form a solid solution in which crystalline chromium carbide is not formed; and
forming at least one hard coating on a surface of the carburized hardened layer of the basis material,

wherein the hard coating has a surface hardness greater than that of the carburized layer.

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19. (Amended) An exterior part of timepiece, comprising a stainless steel having at its surface a carburized layer wherein carbon is diffused so as to form a solid solution in which crystalline chromium carbide is not formed,

wherein the carburized layer has a specular surface obtained by removing rough faces formed on the outermost surface thereof and polishing, and having a Vickers hardness (HV) of 500 or more.

21. (Amended) An exterior part of timepiece, comprising a stainless steel having at its surface a carburized layer wherein carbon is diffused so as to form a solid solution in which crystalline chromium carbide is not formed,

wherein the carburized layer has a machined surface.

24. (Amended) A wristwatch band comprising a plurality of band pieces of stainless steel connected to each other,
each of the band pieces having at its surface a carburized layer wherein carbon is diffused so as to form a solid solution in which crystalline chromium carbide is not formed,
wherein the carburized layer has a specular surface obtained by removing rough faces formed on the outermost surface thereof and polishing, and having a Vickers hardness (HV) of 500 or more.

25. (Amended) A wristwatch band comprising a plurality of band pieces of stainless steel connected to each other,
each of the band pieces having at its surface a carburized layer wherein carbon is diffused so as to form a solid solution in which crystalline chromium carbide is not formed,
wherein the carburized layer has a machined surface.

26. (Twice Amended) The wristwatch band as claimed in claim 24, wherein the band pieces are connected to each other by means of connecting parts of stainless steel,
each of the connecting parts having on at least a portion of its surface a carburized layer wherein carbon is diffused so as to form a solid solution.

Please add new claims 70-78 as follows.

-- 70. The decorative item as claimed in claim 1, wherein the stainless steel is an austenitic stainless steel.

71. The decorative item as claimed in claim 1, wherein the carburized hardened layer has a specular surface.

72. The decorative item as claimed in claim 1, wherein the hard coating is formed by dry plating.

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73. The exterior part of a timepiece as claimed in claim 19, wherein a region of the carburized layer extending from the surface thereof has a depth of from 1 to 2 μm .

74. An exterior part of timepiece, comprising a stainless steel having at its surface a carburized layer wherein carbon is diffused so as to form a solid solution in which crystalline chromium carbide is not formed,

wherein a machined surface formed before carburization is provided on the carburized layer surface.

75. The exterior part of timepiece as claimed in claim 21, wherein the machined surface is a hairline surface or a honing surface.

76. The exterior part of timepiece as claimed in claim 62, wherein the machined surface is a hairline surface or a honing surface.